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THE SECOND COMING.

A Vision.

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For four successive Sundays, the advent note had been sounding through the church that I attended. The hymns, the prayers, the sermons, all spoke of the second coming of Christ. To it all, as a good churchman, I had listened seriously, and I hope devoutly. It had mingled itself, dream-wise, with the creeping light of painted windows falling in gold and purple and crimson over sumptuous pews, where fair forms feathers and flowers, satins and laces, and the portly figures of respectable citizens were to be seen, bowing in responses, rising at the gospel, joining in the anthems, and in other ways signifying assent to the wonderful truths which formed the subject of the sermon.

At times, like a vivid shaft of light, some declaration from the epistle or gospel would for a moment pierce the dreamy solemnity, and I would start as if an angel had touched me with an awakening thrill.

"THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT, THE DAY IS AT HAND."

My soul vibrated for a moment like a harp. Was it true. The night, the long night of the world's groping agony and blind dilemma—is it almost over—is the day at hand?

Again: "They shall see the son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, look up and rejoice, for your redemption is nigh."

Coming!—the Son of Man really coming—coming into this world again with power and great glory?

There were moments when I thought of it, in which I rose up in my seat and all the church seemed glorified!

Will this really ever happen? Will this solid, common-place earth see it? Will these skies over New York brighten and flash, and will upturned faces be watching to see His coming?

So our minister preached, in a solemn sermon; and for a few moments, at times, I felt a thrill of reality in hearing. But as the well-dressed crowd passed down the aisle, my neighbor, Mr Stockton, whispered to me not to forget the meeting of the bank directors on Monday evening; and Mrs. Goldthwaite poured into my wife's ear a charge not to forget her Thursday receptions; and my wife, as she came out, asked me if I had observed the extravagant toilet of Mrs. Pemberton.

"So absurd," she said, "when her income, I know cannot be half what ours is, and I never think of sending to Paris for my things—should I look on it as morally wrong?"

I spoke of the sermon. "Yes," said my wife. "What a sermon!—so solemn. I wonder that all New York is not drawn to hear our rector. What could be more powerful than such discourses? My dear, by-the-by, don't forget to change Mary's opal ring for a diamond one—dear me! The Christmas presents were all so on my mind that I was thinking of them every now and then in church—and that was so wrong of me!"

"My dear, sometimes it seems to me as if all our life were unreal. We go to church, and the things that we hear are either true or false. If they are true, what things they are! For instance, these advent sermons. If we are looking for that coming, we ought somehow to feel and live differently from what we do! Do we really believe what we hear in Church, or is it a painted dream?"

"I do believe," said my wife earnestly, (she is a good woman, my wife)—"yes I do believe, but it is just as you say—oh, dear! I feel as if I am very worldly—I have so many things to think of!" And she sighed.

So did I; for I knew that I, too, was very worldly. After a pause I said:

"Suppose Christ should really come to New York this Christmas, and it should begin to be authoritatively announced that He would be in the city that day?"

"I think," said my wife, "there would be some embarrassment on the part of our great men, legislators, and old Commodores, in anticipation of a personal interview. Fancy a meeting of the City Council to arrange a reception for the Lord Jesus Christ!"

"Perhaps," said I, "he would refuse all offers of the rich and great. Perhaps our fashionable churches would plead for his presence in vain. He would not be in palaces."

"Oh!" said my wife earnestly "if I thought our money separates us from him I would give it all—yes, all—might I see him one hour."

She spoke from the bottom of her heart, and for a moment her face was glorified.

"You will see him some day," said I, "and the money that we are willing to give up at a word from him will not keep him from us."

That evening the thoughts of the waking hours mirrored themselves into a dream.

I seemed to be out walking in the streets of New York, and to be conscious of a strange vague sense of something just declared of which all were speaking with a suppressed air of mysterious voice.

There was a stir of hushed whispering stillness was around. Groups of men stand at the corners of the streets and discuss an impending something with suppressed voices.

I heard one say to another, "Really coming? What! To-morrow?" And others said, "Yes, to-morrow—on Christmas day he will be here."

It was night. The stars were glittering down with a keen and frosty light, the shops glistened in their Christmas array, but the same sense of hushed expectancy pervaded everything. There seemed to be nothing doing, and each person looked wistfully on his neighbor, as if to say, Have you heard?

Suddenly as I waited, an angel form was with me, gliding softly by my side. The face was solemn, serene, and calm. Above the forehead was a pale, tremulous phosphoric radiance of a light purer than any on earth—a light of a quality so different from that of the street lamps that my celestial attendant seemed to move in a sphere alone.

Yet, though I felt awe, I felt a sort of confiding love as I said, "Tell me—is it really true? Is Christ coming?"

"He is," said the angel. "To-morrow he will be here!"

"What joy!" I cried.

"It is joy!" said the angel. "Alas! to many in this city it is only terror. Come with me."

In a moment I seemed to be standing with him in a parlor of one of the chief palaces of New York. A stout, florid, bald headed man was seated at a table covered with papers which he was sorting over with nervous anxiety, muttering to himself as he did so. On a sofa lay a sad looking, delicate woman, her emaciated hands clasped over a little book. The room was, in all its appointments, a witness of boundless wealth. Gold and silver, and gems, and foreign furniture, and costly pictures, and articles of vertu—everything that money could buy was heaped together; and yet the man himself seemed to me to have been neither elevated nor refined by the confluence of all these treasures. He seemed nervous and uneasy. He wiped the sweat from his brow and spoke:

"I don't know, wife, how you feel, but I don't like this news. I don't understand it. It puts a stop to everything that I know anything about."

"O John," said the woman, turning toward him a face pale and fervent, and clasping her hands, "how can you say so?" And as she spoke, I could see breaking out above her head a tremulous light, like that above the brow of the angel.

"Well, Mary, it's the truth. I don't care if I do say it. I don't want to meet—well I wish he'd put it off. What does he want of me? I'd be willing to make over—well, three millions, to found a hospital, if he'd be satisfied and let me go on. Yes, I'd give three millions—to buy off from to-morrow."

"Is He not our Best Friend?"

"Best friend!" said the man, with a look of half fright, half anger. "Mary, you don't know what you're talking about! You know I always hated these things. There's no use in it; I can't see into them. In fact, I hate them."

She cast on him a look of pity. "Can't I make you see?" she said.

"No, indeed you can't. Why, look here," he added, pointing to the papers, "here is what stands for millions! To-night it's mine, and to-morrow it will be all so much waste paper, and then what have I left? Do you think I can rejoice? I'd give half! I'd give—yes, the whole, not to have him come these hundred years." She stretched out her thin hand toward him, but he pushed it back.

"Do you see?" said the angel to me, solemnly "between him and her there is a *great gulf fixed*. They have lived in one house, with the gulf between them, for years! She cannot go to him; he cannot come to her. To-morrow she will rise to Christ as a dewdrop to the sun, and he will call to the mountains and rocks to fall on him—not because Christ hates him, but because he hates Christ."

Again the scene was changed. We stood together in a little low attic, lighted by one small lamp—how poor it was—a broken chair, a rickety table, a bed in the corner—where the little ones were cuddling close to one another for warmth. Poor things, the air was so frosty that their breath congealed upon the bed clothes, as they talked in soft baby voices. "When mother comes she will bring us some supper," they said. "But I'm so cold," said the little outsider. "Get in the middle, then," said the other two, "and we'll warm you. Mother promised she'd make a fire when she came in if that man would pay her." "What a bad man he is," said the oldest boy; "he never pays mother unless he can't help it."

Just then the door opened and a pale, thin woman came in, laden with packages.

She laid all down and came to her children's bed, clasping their hands in a rapture.

"Joy! joy! children, O joy, joy! Christ is coming! He will be here to-morrow!"

Every little bird in the nest was up, and the little arms around the mother's neck; the children believed it at once. They had heard of the good Jesus. He had been their mother's only friend through many a cold and hungry day, and they doubted not He was coming.

"O, mother, will He take us? He will won't He?"

"Yes, yes, my little child," she said softly, smiling to herself; "He shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in His bosom."

Suddenly again, as by the slide of a magic lantern, another scene was presented.

We stood in a lonely room, where a woman was sitting with her head bowed forward upon her hands. Alone, forsaken, slandered, she was in bitterness of spirit. Hard, cruel tongues had spoken her name with vile assertions, and a thoughtless world had believed. There had been a babble of accusations, a crowd to rejoice in iniquity, and a few to pity. She thought herself alone and she spoke: "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I am as a wonder unto many, but Thou art my strong refuge."

In a moment the angel touched her. "My sister," he said, "be of good cheer. Christ will be here to-morrow."

She started up with her hands clasped, her eye bright, her whole form dilated, as she seemed to look into the heavens, and said, with rapture:

"Come, Lord, and judge me, for Thou knowest me altogether. Come son of Mary, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded. Oh, for the judgment seat of Christ!"

Again I stood in a brilliant room, full of luxuries. Three or four fair women were standing pensively talking with each other. The apartment was bestrewn with jewelry, laces, silks, velvets, and every fanciful elegance of fashion; but they looked troubled.

"This seems to me really awful," said one, with a suppressed sigh. "What troubles me is, I know so little about it."

"Yes," said another, "and it puts a stop to everything! Of what use will all these be to-morrow?"

There was a poor seamstress in the corner of the room who now spoke, and "We shall be ever with the Lord," said she.

"I'm sure I don't know what that can mean," said the first speaker, with a kind of a shudder; "it seems rather fearful."

"Well," said the other, "it seems so sudden when one never dreamed of any such thing—to change all at once from this to that other life."

"It is enough to be with *Him*," said the poor woman. "Oh, I have so longed for it!"

"*The great gulf*," again said the angel.

Then again we stood on the steps of a church. A band of clergymen were together—Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Old School, and New School, all stood hand in hand.

"It is no matter about these old bones," they said. *He is coming*. He will settle all. Ordinations and ordinances, sacraments, creeds, are but the scaffolding of the edifice. They are the shadows; the substance is CHRIST!" And, hand in hand, they turned their faces when the Christmas morning light began faintly glowing, and I heard them saying together, with one heart and one voice, "Come, LORD JESUS; come quickly!"—*Church Union.*

A NEW ARITHMETIC.—Slick gent going into a whisky shop: "Well, I believe I will spend my dime for crackers this morning."

Barkeeper hands him crackers, which he takes. "I cannot stand them give me some brandy for the crackers." Barkeeper gives him the brandy; he pours it out, smells of it, shakes his head, "don't think I can go that, give me some whisky for the brandy." Barkeeper hands him out a full glass, drinks it down and starts out.

Barkeeper—"Hold on there! you have not paid me for the whisky.

Sleek gent—"I gave you the brandy for the whisky sir."

"Well, you ain't paid me for the brandy sir."

"I gave you the crackers for the brandy sir."

"But you have not paid me for the crackers, sir."

"Well, sir you have got your crackers yet."

Barkeeper said no more.

"How are you Broom?" asked a bluff old sailor of a fop, who was always annoyed unless he was address as Mr. Broom, and who responded, "I'd have you know, sir, that I've a handle to my name." "Oh, all right how are you Broom handle?"